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History and Romance  
of  
“Old Glory”



# History and Romance of “Old Glory”

*by*

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No,

# “OLD GLORY”

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Flag of the fearless-hearted,  
Flag of the broken chain,  
Flag in a day-dawn started,  
Never to pale or wane—  
Dearly we prize its colors,  
With the heaven light breaking through,  
The clustered stars and the steadfast bars,  
The red, the white, and the blue.

—MARGARET SANGSTER

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One hundred and thirty-seven years ago—June fourteenth, 1777—“Old Glory,” by act of Congress, was first unfurled to the breeze as the National Emblem of the United States of America.

The story of its birth will always be near and dear to the heart of every true American—a story that will never grow old.\*

The quaint little house at 239 Arch Street, Philadelphia, in which the first American flag was made, is still standing.

In 1774, pretty Elizabeth Griscom, of an excellent family, and then twenty-two years of age, became the wife of Lieutenant John Ross, the grandson of the Rev. George Ross, formerly a Presbyterian clergyman of Scotland, who came to this country in 1703, settled in New Castle, Delaware, and became an Episcopal rector. Soon after their marriage,

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\*While the authenticity of this version is not completely established by official records, this account of the origin of the flag is generally accepted as correct.

they began the upholstery business in the Arch Street house (the building material of which is said to have been brought across the water in the "Welcome" by William Penn). Young Ross was a member of a local military company and an enthusiastic patriot. He devoted much of his time to the cause dear to his heart, while his wife successfully carried on the business during his absence.

For a time all went well in the quiet little house, in spite of the rapidly gathering war clouds. But the happy union was destined to be soon broken. On a chill Winter night, some two years after their marriage, the young patriot kissed his wife affectionately and went down to a wharf along the Delaware to guard some powder stored there. Shortly after, an explosion took place, and he was mortally wounded. He was carried to his home, where in spite of tenderest care and nursing he died, and was buried on the 20th of January, 1776, in the historical burial ground of Old Christ Church. The sorrow-stricken wife bravely faced the future alone, and determined to continue the business established by her husband. Being an unusually expert needle woman, she did not lack for patronage.

About this time interest began to be manifested in the important subject of having a flag to represent the infant nation. George Ross, a member of Congress from Pennsylvania, was made chairman of a committee appointed to recommend a design for a flag. It is said of him "wherever weakness was trodden down by strength he fearlessly lent his aid." Being an uncle of John Ross, who had recently lost his life in his country's service, and naturally much interested in the struggling young

widow, he suggested to his committee that they consult with her in reference to the business entrusted to them. Accordingly, accompanied by General Washington, the committee called on the youthful seamstress.

When shown a design which had been tentatively agreed upon, Mrs. Ross was asked if she could reproduce it. Her cheerful response was, "I do not know, but I'll try." Observing that the stars in the design contained six points, she called attention to the fact, and suggested that it would be better to make them with five points. While Washington agreed with her, he stated that many stars would be needed, and since it was easier to make six-pointed ones, it would be better not to make a change. By way of answer, she quickly folded a bit of paper and by a deft clip of her scissors made a star of five points.

It is easy to imagine the joy in the little Arch Street house when the news was received that Congress had adopted the design, and that the widow was authorized to make a large number of flags.

But this did not end the romance of the little flag maker. The very next day after Congress adopted the flag she was married in Old Swedes Church, Philadelphia, to Captain Joseph Ashburn, who was at that time engaged in the merchant marine service. Captain Ashburn's vocation kept him at sea the greater part of his time, and the burden of carrying on the flag-making business fell upon his wife. In 1781 his vessel was captured and he was taken a prisoner of war to England and incarcerated in the Old Mill Prison, Plymouth. Here he found an old friend, John Claypoole, and they whiled away many a weary hour in

conversing of home and loved ones beyond the sea. Great was their joy when they received news, through a newspaper baked in a loaf of bread, of the surrender of the British General, Cornwallis, at Yorktown, and they looked hopefully forward to the time of their release. But disease broke out in the prison and Captain Ashburn fell a victim to its ravages and died on the 3rd of March, after a brief illness. His faithful companion and friend, John Claypoole, carefully treasured the few effects and all the love messages of the departed patriot; and when his own release came soon after, he was the first to bear to the bereaved wife and his two children the news of their loss.

On the 8th of May, 1783, Mrs. Ashburn and John Claypoole were married in Christ Church and for three years made their home in the Arch Street house. The rigors of confinement in the English prison left their dread effects upon Mr. Claypoole's physical organization, and at the comparatively early age of forty-five he was stricken with paralysis; thenceforth until his death, August 3, 1817, he was practically helpless.

Mrs. Claypoole continued the business of flag-making until 1812, when, at the age of sixty, she retired in favor of her daughter, Mrs. Wilson, who continued the business until 1857. Thus, mother and daughter were engaged in making flags for the long period of eighty years.

Our pioneer flag-maker died on the 30th of January, 1836, at the advanced age of eighty-four. She is buried in Mount Moriah Cemetery, Philadelphia, and here on Memorial Day flags and flowers are strewn upon her grave.

# Early American Flags

Prior to 1777 the various American cruisers carried all sorts of State or Colonial flags, until the intrepid John Paul Jones, as senior First Lieutenant, hoisted the "Flag of America" with his own hands over Commodore Hopkins' flagship, the "Alfred," when she was lying in the Delaware, at Philadelphia, in December, 1775. Even this was really a private ensign, the design of which is not known, but that it embodied the spirit of patriotism and the purpose of the colonists there is no doubt.

The first striped flag was raised at Washington's headquarters, Cambridge, Mass., January 2, 1776, and was saluted with thirteen guns.

Professor Dwight says that the Naval Committee of Congress presented to Paul Jones the first official flag of the United States that was ever made. Mr. Buell, in his "Life of Paul Jones," says that the captain displayed the new flag on the "Ranger" on the Fourth of July, 1777, and made a special trip for that purpose from Boston to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where the vessel was being fitted for sea.

## "OLD GLORY" FIRST RECOGNIZED.

On the 2nd of February, 1778, Captain John Paul Jones had the great satisfaction of seeing the Stars and Stripes "recognized for the first time and in the fullest manner by the Flag of France" by salutes first to the "Ranger" and later to the "Independence" of Jones' fleet. This was probably the first recognition by any foreign power of the colors of the United States of America. Jones received his appointment to the command of the "Ranger" on the

very day that our national flag was adopted by Congress. He said "That flag and I are twins. We cannot be parted in life or in death. So long as we can float we shall float together; if we sink, we shall go down as one."

It was not until later years, however, that the endearing term "Old Glory" was applied to the "Stars and Stripes."

Captain William Driver was, without doubt, the first man to christen our flag "Old Glory." He was born at Salem, Mass., March 17, 1803. When about to sail from that port in command of the brig "Charles Doggett," in the year 1831, he was presented with a large American flag. As it was sent aloft, and broke out into the breeze, Captain Driver christened the beautiful emblem "Old Glory," and this was the name he ever after used for it. His flag shared with the Captain his perils and adventures of the deep, and on his retirement from the sea it was taken by him to Nashville, Tennessee, where he made his home.

The Captain was a most pronounced "Union Man," and his outspoken fondness for the flag made him widely known as "Old Glory Driver." During the Civil War his neighbors naturally felt a special desire to have that particular flag. The Captain's home and grounds were repeatedly searched, but in vain. They knew it was there, but find it they could not. The old Captain told them they should see it only when it floated over a united country. In order to keep it safe until that longed-for time, the Captain with his own hands quilted "Old Glory" into a comforter and made it his bed-fellow. When peace was restored, true to his promise, Captain Driver

took the flag to the Capitol Building in Nashville, and it was soon waving over the city. As he saw it once more unfurled, the old man exclaimed, "Now that Old Glory is up there, gentlemen, I am ready to die."

In 1882—just four years before his death—the Captain gave the beloved flag to his niece, Mrs. Cooke, with directions for her to do with it as she thought best after his decease. She afterward presented it to its present caretakers, the Essex Institute of Salem, Mass. So, after all its voyages and vicissitudes, the original "Old Glory" is to-day safe in the very harbor from which it first sailed away eighty-three years ago.

### A DISPUTED QUESTION.

When the flag was first used in battle is a subject of much dispute. On a bronze tablet in Rome, New York, marking the site of Fort Stanwix, renamed Fort Schuyler, now Utica, New York, is this inscription:

"A fort which never surrendered. Defended August 6, 1777, by Colonel Peter Gansvoort and Lieutenant Marinus Willett. Here the Stars and Stripes was first unfurled in battle."

While at Cooch's Bridge, near Wilmington, Delaware, there is a monument which is thus inscribed:

"The Stars and Stripes was first unfurled at Cooch's Bridge on September 3rd, 1777. Erected by the patriotic societies and citizens of the State of Delaware, September 3rd, 1901."

It is known, however, that Washington's army carried the new-born flag when, in 1777, he repulsed Cornwallis on the banks of the Assumpsic. It floated amid the smoke and roar of the battle of Brandywine in Pennsylvania, on September 11, 1777, about five weeks

after it is said to have been raised over Fort Stanwix; it shared in the glory and gloom of the Battle of Germantown, Philadelphia, on the 4th of October of the same year; it fluttered in the breeze at Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga; it witnessed the unparalleled sufferings and privations at Valley Forge, the humiliation of Cornwallis at Yorktown, and the evacuation of New York by the enemy in November, 1783.

JUNE 14th, 1777, GENERALLY  
ACCEPTED AS AUTHENTIC.

It is officially stated that "no satisfactory evidence has ever been produced to prove that a flag bearing the union of stars and stripes has ever been in public use prior to the resolution of June 14, 1777," although it is true that the thirteen stripes in alternate white and blue appeared in the standard of the Philadelphia Light Horse as early as 1775; and that the flag representing the thirteen colonies, raised at Washington's headquarters in Cambridge on the 2nd of January, 1776, "had the thirteen stripes just as they appear in the flag of the present day."

"OLD GLORY" AND OUR SCHOOLS.

The first recorded instance of the flag being raised over a school building is probably that of May, 1812, over the log schoolhouse on Catamount Hill, Mass. The second war with Great Britain was then threatened and the flag was raised in an outburst of patriotism and loyalty to the United States Government.

But the great credit for the almost universal custom of saluting the flag in our Public Schools is undoubtedly due to a well-known Boston weekly paper. It began this work back

in the '80s. Now it is estimated that practically every school, including those in Porto Rico, Hawaii and the Philippines, thus honor "Old Glory" at the opening exercises.

Every pupil rises and gives a military salute, then all together they slowly and distinctly repeat:

"I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

### NOW IN WASHINGTON.

What became of the first flag made by Mrs. Ross is not known, but in the National Museum at Washington is the first American flag ever hoisted over a ship of war. It is said to have been made in Philadelphia by the Misses Mary and Sarah Austin (who failed to put the thirteen stars on the field of blue according to the original design), and unfurled by the famous Paul Jones. This flag was presented to President McKinley by a Mrs. R. P. Stafford, a lineal descendant of Bayard Stafford, a young officer who served on the "Bon Homme Richard" and the "Serapis" when Jones commanded. He saved the flag at the risk of his own life and Captain Paul Jones presented it to him.

### PRESENT DESIGN PERMANENTLY ADOPTED.

In 1812 a committee was elected by Congress to decide upon a permanent design for the flag, and the result was that the original thirteen stripes were again used, the stars being arranged on the blue field in the form of a square, with one constellation for each new State. In 1818 this plan was formally adopted by Congress, and the flag with its thirteen stripes,

and stars corresponding in number to the States in the Union, became the established emblem of the Nation.

Mrs. Reid, wife of the famous sea captain, and some of her young women friends, made the first flag of the new design. It was hoisted over the House of Representatives on the thirteenth of April, 1818. The number of stars at this time was twenty, Illinois having been admitted that year.

### THE GROWTH OF TERRITORY.

The dominion of the flag since its adoption less than a century and a half ago, has increased to 3,686,780 square miles, including continental United States, Alaska, the Philippines, Hawaii, Porto Rico, Guan, Samoa and the Panama Canal Zone.

According to the last census, the population represented by the American flag numbers 109,100,000 people. These include the four races of the world—white, black, yellow and red. The white population over which the flag holds sway composes 87.9 per cent. of the total, 11.6 per cent. are African, 3 per cent. are red or Indian, and 2 per cent. are Mongolian or yellow. Most of the natives of Alaska are Mongolians. Those of the Philippines are chiefly Malay, and of Porto Rico, African.

The flags of only three nations—Great Britain, Russia and China—represent a larger number of people than does the American emblem. The commerce under the American flag extends to every quarter of the globe.

While the British flag is the only one on which the sun never sets, the American flag is a close second, it having been proved by calculations made by the United States Naval Observatory that from the 22nd of March to

the 22nd of September the sun shines continuously in the eyes of the American eagle. This astronomical fact brings a realization of how great a nation we have become.

The most Eastern point in the dominions of the United States is in the island of Porto Rico, and the most Western point is in the island of Balobe, in the Philippines. On the 22nd of March the sun sets on Balobe Island at exactly the same time that it rises in Porto Rico, and this condition continues until the 22nd of September.

Between May 31 and July 13 the sun rises on the easternmost point of Maine at the same time that it sets on the westernmost Aleutian Island off the coast of Alaska. The Spanish War, which added to our island possessions, lengthened the time of continual sunshine from a month and a half to six months.

At Cape Barrow, the northernmost point of Alaska, the sun does not set at all from May 31 to July 13, for the reason that Cape Barrow is within the Arctic Circle, so it follows that during this interval the sun never sets on any flag that flies in the Arctic.

## EARLY FLAGS ON AMERICAN SOIL.

The first flag ever planted on American soil was the one borne by Columbus in 1497, that blazoned forth the arms of Leon and Castile.

The French flag was unfurled in America in 1554, and when Sir Walter Raleigh, fifty years later, took possession of the country which he named Virginia in honor of his queen (Elizabeth), he hoisted the standard of her majesty, and the ruddy lions of England were quartered with the lilies of France.

Then the Dutch flag was planted in New

York in 1624, and from that time until the adoption of the Stars and Stripes there were many changes in the manner and appearance of the ensigns used.

The flag at the time of the Revolution had thirteen stars; in the War of 1812, fifteen; in the Mexican War, twenty-nine; in the Civil War, thirty-five, and in the Spanish-American War, forty-five. The number to-day is forty-eight, arranged on the blue field in six rows of eight stars each.



### THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER.

(Written by FRANCIS SCOTT KEY on the day the British withdrew from the attack on Fort McHenry.)

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,  
    What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's  
        last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro'  
    the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting  
    in air,  
Gave proof thro' the night that our flag was  
        still there.

#### Chorus.

Oh, say, does that star-spangled banner yet  
    wave  
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the  
        brave?

On the shore, dimly seen thro' the midst of  
the deep  
Where the foe's haughty host in dread si-  
lence reposes,  
What is that which the breeze, o'er the tower-  
ing steep  
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half dis-  
closes?

Now it catches the gleam of the morning's  
first beam,  
In full glory reflected, now shines on the  
stream;  
'Tis the star-spangled banner, oh! long may  
it wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of  
the brave!

Oh! thus be it e'er when freemen shall stand  
Between their loved homes and the war's  
desolation;  
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n-  
rescued land  
Praise the pow'r that hath made and pre-  
serv'd us a nation;  
Then conquer we must when our cause it is  
just,  
And this be our motto, "In God is our trust."  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall  
wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of  
the brave.



## “Two June Anniversaries”

This month is celebrated the one hundred and thirty-seventh anniversary of “Old Glory” and the forty-sixth anniversary of the Strawbridge & Clothier Store.

In dwelling upon the history of our national emblem, and all that it means to us to-day, seeking the underlying principles upon which we as a nation have builded, every line of thought leads unerringly to these two words —INTEGRITY, INDUSTRY.

And likewise, in considering the governing factors in the growth of this establishment there can be found no other answer.

With such men of sturdy, sterling character as William Penn, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and others of like stamp as preceptors of the infant nation, is it any wonder that the one-time pupil has developed so marvelously in power and influence among the great nations of the world?

Character and integrity are greater than intellect—greater than genius; they command that which gold cannot buy—respect, confidence, friendship, real success.

What the Strawbridge & Clothier organization has accomplished during these past forty-six years under the wise guidance of its founders and later of their sons, finds its source in the same fundamental principles which have made our country what it is to-day.





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